



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

TESTIMONY TO THE HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

March 12, 2015

*Benjamin Barnes
Secretary
Office of Policy and Management*

Testimony Supporting House Bill No. 6844

AN ACT CONCERNING IN-STATE TUITION ELIGIBILITY

Good morning Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Willis and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. I am here to testify in support of HB 6844 AN ACT CONCERNING IN-STATE TUITION ELIGIBILITY. This proposal would allow the children of undocumented immigrants to attend state institutions of higher education and pay the in-state tuition rate if the student has attended a Connecticut high school for at least two years and has graduated from a Connecticut high school.

This population of students does not qualify for any federal financial aid which is often the deciding factor for needy students as they assess whether they will be able to pursue higher education. They also do not currently qualify for state assistance, institutional aide or the Governor's Scholarship. These students are often among the most financially needy. Dreamers and their families stand to benefit greatly and, in turn, contribute to our state by gaining access to higher education. By making in-state tuition available to more students, we will be bolstering Connecticut's labor market by adding new workers, helping to stem the rate of loss of retiring workers leaving the workforce. Students who graduate with degrees from public universities and colleges in Connecticut are more likely to stay and build careers in Connecticut. Our state is always in search of ways to stem the migration of young people out of Connecticut. Expanding eligibility for in-state tuition to these students will increase the number of young people we retain here beyond college.

This is also a question of fairness. Many of these students were brought to the United States by their parents in search of a better life and they should not be penalized by being denied access to the tools necessary to better themselves. There are many stories of "Dreamers" who want nothing more than a fair shot at higher education and degree or certificate which will allow them to contribute to Connecticut's economy and their own future success.

For this reason, Governor Malloy has proposed this bill and has also proposed the creation of a scholarship fund in HB 6845 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GOVERNOR CONCERNING HIGHER EDUCATION. This fund will be administered by a non-profit organization, New Haven Promise, which has the necessary experience making merit-based grants to New Haven students, including undocumented students. This fund will provide \$150,000 in scholarships in its first year and \$300,000 in its second year to undocumented students statewide and, even in this difficult budget year, will allow us to begin to offer an opportunity for higher education to students who had previously been unable to access it. This scholarship fund is a first step towards making financial aid available to undocumented students and it is the right thing to do.

I urge the committee to support Governor Malloy's proposals as the right thing to do for Connecticut's future and for the future of undocumented students in our state. Thank you.